

1. (Amended) A fastener for coupling together two or more items, said fastener comprising:

(a) a connector having a first end and a second end,

a<sub>1</sub> (b) a first cross-member formed onto the first end of said connector, said first cross-member comprising a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface, the first end of said connector being formed onto the flat inner surface of said first cross-member, and

(c) a second cross-member formed onto the second end of said connector.

12. (Amended) A needle well-suited for use in dispensing a plastic fastener of the type comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof, said needle comprising:

a<sub>2</sub> (a) a substantially flat bottom wall, and

(b) a pair of spaced apart sidewalls which extend generally orthogonally up from said flat bottom wall,

(c) wherein said needle is shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore which is adapted to receive the cross-member of the plastic fastener, said bore being generally rectangular in lateral cross-section, the bore having a transverse cross-sectional height and a transverse cross-sectional width, the transverse cross-sectional width being greater than the transverse cross-sectional height.

a<sub>3</sub> 14. (Amended) The needle as claimed in claim 13 wherein one flange is formed onto and extends orthogonally inward from the free end of each of said pair of sidewalls.

a4 16. (Amended) The needle as claimed in claim 12 wherein said needle is shaped to define a longitudinally-extending slot which is adapted to receive the connector of the plastic fastener.

a5 18. (Amended) A combination of a fastener and a needle, said fastener comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof and a second cross-member at a second end thereof, each of the first and second cross-members being in the form of a thin disk which includes an inner surface and an outer surface, the first end of said connector being formed onto the inner surface of the first cross-member and the second end of said connector being formed onto the inner surface of the second cross-member, said needle terminating in a tip at a front end thereof and being shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore and a longitudinally-extending slot, said longitudinally-extending bore being dimensioned to receive one of said first and second cross-members, said longitudinally-extending slot being dimensioned to permit said connector to extend therethrough while said one of said first and second cross-members is disposed within said longitudinally-extending bore.